The Cleveland Museum of Art

Kristen Windmuller-Luna Appointed Curator of African Arts

News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sunday, December 22, 2019

Kelley Notaro Schreiber

The Cleveland Museum of Art
knotaro@clevelandart.org
216-707-6898

Cleveland, OH (December 22, 2019) — Following an international search, the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) announces the appointment of Kristen Windmuller-Luna as curator of African arts. She will assume her responsibilities at the CMA on January 6, 2020. This winter, Windmuller-Luna will give a public lecture at the CMA, “Karibu! (Welcome!) – Living Histories, Contemporary Connections, and Ethical Best Practice in Curating African Arts,” in which she will highlight topics pertaining to collaboration, collecting, and curating African arts in 21st century museums.

“Kristen is a leader in the field of African art. The work that she has been doing to forge connections and partnerships with colleagues, museums, and cultural institutions on the African continent is very exciting,” said Director William M. Griswold. “With Kristen as a thought-partner, we eagerly anticipate working with members of the African and African heritage communities in Cleveland and beyond.”

As curator of African arts, Windmuller-Luna will oversee the care and development of the collection. She will guide and organize special exhibitions and programs exploring all aspects of African arts, from the historic through the contemporary, and will advocate for the role of African arts in the broader narrative context of art history as well as within the CMA’s encyclopedic collection. Windmuller-Luna will work closely with the director and chief curator on the identification and acquisition of artworks to augment the collection.

The CMA’s former curator of African arts, Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, commented on the appointment, “Kristen is an accomplished curator who did incredible work during her time at the Princeton University Art Museum and at the Brooklyn Museum. Her recent exhibition *One: Egúngún* (2019) at the Brooklyn Museum is arguably a benchmark in the comprehensive examination of the life of a single object, accomplished with scholarly rigor, and responsive and inclusive engagement with the constituent community. She is well grounded in both historical and contemporary arts of Africa. I have no doubt that she will do groundbreaking work at the Cleveland Museum of Art. I wish her immense success in Cleveland.”

“It’s a great honor to join the Cleveland Museum of Art family. Museums opened my eyes to a world beyond my hometown, and in my position at the CMA, I hope to reassert African arts’ role in art history and in the encyclopedic collection, sharing its beauty and importance with a global audience,” said Kristen Windmuller-Luna. “The CMA’s mission to ‘create transformative experiences through art for the benefit of all the people’ aligns with my own values, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to increase access and to welcoming in different ways of knowing, learning, and sharing.”

Previously, Windmuller-Luna worked in curatorial roles at the Brooklyn Museum, the Princeton University Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Neuberger Museum of Art, the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation, and also served as a lecturer at Columbia University. An art historian and curator, her research and writing on both historic and contemporary African arts has been published and presented in a variety of African, American, and European outlets, and was featured in Henry Louis Gates’ 2017 PBS documentary *Africa’s Great Civilizations*. Recent projects have taken her to Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ethiopia.

Since April 2018, Windmuller-Luna has served as the Sills Family Consulting Curator of African Arts at the Brooklyn Museum, where she curated two exhibitions: *One: Egúngún* (February 8–August 18, 2019) and *African Arts—Global Conversations* (opening February 14, 2020). Considering the life history of a singular Yorùbá mask (an *egúngún*), her exhibition *One: Egúngún* was named by The New York Times as one of New York City’s “Top 10 Must-See Summer Exhibitions,” and was described by Artsy as “a touchstone for an ethical model of engaging with cultural heritage objects, as well as the living histories and communities connected to them.” The show forged connections between the museum and the local Yorùbá community in Brooklyn as well as with Yorùbá communities in Nigeria.

Prior to joining Brooklyn, Windmuller-Luna curated *Changing the Conversation: African Arts in Dialogue* (2017) at the Princeton University Art Museum and *Life in Miniature: Asante Goldweights and African Sculpture* (2012) at the Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation, where she is now a member of the advisory board. She was also part of the curatorial teams for Kongo: Power and Majesty (2015) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for which she contributed to the exhibition’s catalogue, and *Kongo across the Waters* (2014–15) at Princeton.

Windmuller-Luna graduated with a BA in the History of Art from Yale University, and received her doctorate from Princeton University, where she earned the university’s first MA and PhD in the Arts and Architectures of Africa.

About the CMA African Arts Collection

The Cleveland Museum of Art African arts collection includes more than 450 works of tradition-based art from Africa south of the Sahara. In the early twentieth century, the Cleveland Museum became one of the first art museums in the United States to collect and exhibit traditional African art. The core of this collection was donated to the museum in the 1960s and ’70s by the late Cleveland collector Katherine C. White. Some of the strongest objects in the collection were created by artists and makers from the Senufo people (Côte d’Ivoire), the Yorùbá people (Nigeria), and the Kwango-Kwilu region in southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The past seventeen years represent a time of significant growth, including the addition of a distinguished ensemble of thirty-four Congolese

sculptures acquired through a gift-purchase arrangement from the Brussels collectors René and Odette Delenne as well as the addition of works by contemporary African artists.

# # #

About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Magazine Article: Meet Kristen Windmuller-Luna [2]

Press Announcements [3]

Source URL: https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit/kristen-windmuller-luna-appointed-curator-african-arts

Links

[1] https://www.clevelandart.org

[2] https://www.clevelandart.org/magazine/cleveland-art-marchapril-2020/meet-kristen-windmuller-luna

[3] https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit